

*The hope of immortality, a most powerful
motive to fervent charity.*

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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at BARBICAN,

DECEMBER 6, 1761,

On Occasion of the

D E A T H

Of the late Reverend and Learned

Mr. JOSEPH BURROUGHS,

Who departed this Life Nov. 23, 1761,

In the 77th Year of his Age.

By DANIEL NOBLE.

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 I PETER I. 22, 23, 24, 25.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the LORD endureth for ever. And this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.

IN addressing you from these words, I consider myself, and hope you will consider me, only as a remembrancer, one who is to put you in mind of those great truths, upon which you have so often heard your

late excellent Pastor largely expatiate. You well know that he always judg'd these truths to be of so much importance, as to require every possible degree of zeal and assiduity, in those whose more peculiar business it is to recommend them. And I may justly add, that his sense of their importance grew stronger and stronger till the very close of life.

It was in the near prospect of his approaching removal, that he directed me to these words for the present occasion. If therefore any regard be due to the last sentiments and advice of one of the best of men, we cannot possibly be too earnest in our endeavours to impress our minds with a lasting sense of the momentous truths which are here so strongly presented to our view.

But there is evidently so much weight and importance in the words themselves, as to need no additional recommendation. The principal design of St. Peter, in the whole of this passage, was to engage us to cultivate that universal charity, which our blessed Lord has declared to be one of the most distinguishing marks of his true disciples. And it was in this view that our departed friend desired, that we should now consider the words of the text. But it is manifest that they contain a variety of sentiments, which must naturally lead us to every consideration that can tend to establish us in the
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love and practice of every other part of our duty.

Let us, therefore, in the first place, take a brief view of the genuine import of each of the several parts of the text ; and then,

Secondly, let us consider the united force of the whole, as a most powerful persuasive to fervent charity.

In the preceding part of the chapter, the apostle very emphatically describes the superlative worth and importance of those spiritual blessings and advantages, which we enjoy by the gospel of Christ. From hence he takes occasion at the 13th verse, to remind the christians to whom he was writing, of the necessity of their endeavoring to walk suitably to the eminent advantages with which they were favor'd, and that they ought to labor after that habitual sanctity both of heart and of manners, which may reasonably be expected from persons who are illuminated with the clearest views of divine truth, and who profess to consider themselves as bearing a near relation unto the great and righteous father and sovereign of the universe. This general exhortation to the discharge of their whole duty, is continued down to the end of the 21st verse. In the text, the social duties are more particularly recommended and enforced from the nature of the gospel revelation, it's present influences, and its future

ture eternal consequences. " Seeing," says the apostle, " ye have purified your souls " in obeying the truth through the spirit, " unto unfeigned love of the brethren ; " see that ye love one another with a " pure heart, fervently." He takes it for granted, that as they continued steadfast in the christian profession, at a time, when such a profession was almost universally attended with great worldly inconveniencies and dangers, their religious sentiments must in some considerable degree, have wean'd them from the vanities of the present life, and must have establish'd habitual dispositions of purity and spiritual mindedness within them. Nor could he doubt, that they had already a real love to the brethren. But as charity is so capital an article in the christian system, he thinks it expedient to admonish them not to content themselves with any weak and inferior degrees of affection to one another, but to use every means in their power to acquire the most exalted sentiments of benevolence, and to render charity the predominant principle of their actions. And if the apostle thought such an admonition to christians necessary in an age, when charity was so much more prevalent among them than it is at present, it cannot now be improper to address the same exhortation, even to those who have
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made the greatest proficiency in the knowledge and practice of true religion.

“ Seeing then ye have purified your souls ;” are already happily free from the power of vice, and from that excessive love of the world which is inconsistent with the christian frame and temper of spirit — Since ye have already attain’d to such a state of inward freedom and self-command, and are well disposed to every virtuous and rational pursuit “ in,” or by “ obeying the truth through “ the Spirit,” that is, by your conforming to the precepts of christianity, the only genuine and consistent standard of truth, which was at first publish’d with the concurrence of the Holy Spirit, and is at present farther impressed upon the minds of all truly good and virtuous persons, by those influences of the Divine Spirit which are promised to all that seek them with a sincere desire of improving them aright ; — Since ye have now attain’d to such a genuine purity of heart ; remember that purity of heart must naturally lead “ unto unfeigned love of the brethren.”

There is a strict connection between all the several branches of virtue ; but especially between purity of heart and charity ; as genuine purity must not only prevent all occasions of ill-will towards any one of mankind in general, but must also dispose us to cultivate a peculiarly strong and ardent affection towards the *brethren*, that is, those who

who are united with us in the bonds of the christian faith, and in whom we may reasonably trust that purity of heart and virtuous dispositions are prevalent as well as in ourselves; let us therefore endeavor to perfect and complete the other instances of our obedience to the great truths and precepts of the gospel, by "loving one another with a pure heart fervently."

By loving one another "with a pure heart," St. Peter might possibly mean no more than what he had before called "unfeigned love." It is a direction of St. Paul's, that "love should be without dissimulation." And the same sentiment occurs in other parts of scripture. Christian love is something very different from the mere outside shews, the appearances of kindness and good will, which the rules of common civility have establish'd among mankind. True charity is deeply fixed in the heart, and will lead us to be equally solicitous to promote the welfare of our fellow-creatures, in those instances in which none but ourselves can be sensible of our good intentions, as in those cases where our friendly actions must be conspicuous to the whole world. Or, 2dly, by enjoining us to love one another with a pure heart, the sacred writer might mean that we should cultivate and exercise a *disinterested* affection, and be ready to do all the service that we can to one another, not from a desire of having

having the like or greater favors returned to us, but from a pure, generous, and unmixed regard to the happiness of those whom we serve and assist. Or lastly, by this expression the apostle might only intend to impress our minds with a stronger sense of the necessity of our preserving an habitual purity of heart, in order to our continuing steadily in the duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures. He had previously considered purity as leading to charity. Now, therefore, he gives us to understand, that if we suffer ourselves to fall into any kind of vice or worldly-mindedness, it must prove a great impediment to our progress in that which is the chief of all perfections, true and genuine charity. The man whose attention is engrossed by his own concerns, can seldom have leisure to study the welfare of others; and in consequence of his failing to attend to their concerns, he may soon become absolutely indifferent to their most important interests; and his selfish principles may at length gain such an entire ascendant over him, as wholly to pervert his judgment, and represent every thing that he might do for the service of others, as inconsistent with a due regard to his own welfare. If therefore we would cultivate true charity, we must endeavour to disengage our affections from worldly advantages and worldly pleasures, and must have such a regard to

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our duty, as to be able to prefer it to every consideration of temporal interest. And if we have once acquired a just degree of indifference to worldly advantages, what is there that can be imagined capable of leading us into any known breach of charity, or preventing us from displaying our good-will in the noblest and most excellent manner?

But we are required to love one another "fervently," as well as with a pure heart; that is, we must endeavour to raise our charity to as high a degree as possible. We may indeed fall into an excessive attachment to some particular persons; may love them too much, if we suffer our affection to them, to prevent us from being useful to others, who have an equal right to our friendship and assistance. But it is impossible that we should have too strong an affection to any of our fellow-creatures, if at the same time we preserve a due affection to all others. A man cannot love himself too much, if at the same time he has a just regard to all his fellow-creatures. The only case in which a particular attachment can be criminal, is when it weakens our benevolence to any other of our species. He, indeed, who loves any one of his fellow-creatures upon the true principles of christianity, can scarcely fail to have the like affection towards all in general. But whilst we remember that our charity must be universal,

versal, we must also be careful to render it as fervent as possible towards all. For if our love to any one be but small, what can induce us to undergo any considerable difficulties in order to promote their happiness; or to give up any of our own private interests, when it may be absolutely necessary to our acting a friendly and generous part? Hence we see the propriety of our being required to *love our neighbour as ourselves*; since, if our affection to our fellow-creatures does not bear some considerable proportion to that which we have for ourselves, we shall be too apt to suffer our self-love, to render us negligent of the most sacred and essential duties of charity and beneficence. Our blessed Saviour in some of his last discourses upon earth, has required us to carry our charity to such a degree of perfection, as to love one another, even as he has loved us, which must certainly imply the highest possible degree of affection. And in fact, all the same natural reasons, which oblige us to love one another *in any degree*, must equally oblige us to love one another *fervently*. Many flatter themselves, that they fulfil the gospel precepts of charity, merely because they indulge no ill-will against any one, tho', at the same time, there may be very few persons whom they would be willing to assist in any way that should be attended with

any kind of inconvenience or trouble. But should we not immediately condemn, as a mere hypocrite, the man who should make great professions of friendship, and yet, at the same time, give us to understand, that we must not expect him to put himself to any difficulties, in order to procure us any advantage? Can we then imagine, that we have a real love and charity towards those, whose welfare we would not labour to promote, if any way in our power? It is true indeed, that no one person can be of service to all his fellow-creatures. Nor is it incumbent upon any one to subject himself to great inconveniences and difficulties, in order to procure a slight and inconsiderable advantage to another. But we may, in one way or other, be of actual service to many more of our fellow-creatures, than we may at first apprehend to be in our power. And we may certainly cultivate such a degree of benevolence towards all men, as would lead us to delight in promoting their happiness, if ever we should have a suitable opportunity. And every one, who has such a disposition habitually prevalent in his mind, may justly be said to love his fellow-creatures "fer-
"vently."

In the 23d verse, a reason is subjoin'd, which lays Christians under the strictest obligation to cultivate such a fervent love and
charity,

charity, because they are "born again, not
 " of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by
 " the word of God which liveth and abideth
 " for ever and ever." This expression, "being
 born again," is a very strong, but at the
 same time, a very just and natural metaphor.
 The gospel with great propriety represents
 those who are in an unconverted state, as
 having alienated themselves from God, and
 forfeited the benefits of their natural relation
 to him, through the manifold vices in which
 they habitually indulge themselves. This
 must be the case of vicious persons in every
 age. But if we consider the enormous crimes
 which prevailed among the heathens, there
 was a peculiar propriety in styling them the
 children of disobedience and of wrath. The
 gospel was, however, through the infinite
 mercy of God, proposed to all mankind as
 a sufficient means to recover them from the
 unhappy state into which they had plunged
 themselves. All who received the gospel, and
 became conformable to its just requirements,
 actually experienced as great a change in
 their prevailing dispositions, as if they had ac-
 quired a new nature, and were encouraged
 to consider themselves as the children of
 God, and to expect a constant supply of all
 needful blessings from him. And this be-
 ing a change of the highest possible import-
 ance, it is no wonder that it was so fre-
 quently taken notice of in the strongest terms
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by the apostles and primitive christians. It was especially applicable to the point which St. Peter had in view in the text. For they who were now become the children of God, could not but acknowledge themselves to be under an obligation to lay aside all their former vices, and especially to avoid all kinds of malice, all instances of unfriendly conduct and all unnecessary disputes, and to give full scope to the dictates of charity, and manifest an uninterrupted benevolence towards all with whom they had to do. And still farther, as in consequence of their conversion, they consider'd themselves as the heirs of a glorious immortality; this was certainly a powerful preservative against every thing that is inconsistent with true charity. For what can be more evidently absurd, than that they who enjoy the hopes of eternal happiness, should suffer their affections to fix upon any thing in this transitory state, to such a degree, as to prevent their exercising of that charity which they know to be one of the best means of securing their final felicity?

It is no way necessary to our present purpose to enter into the various disputes that have been rais'd about the nature of *regeneration*. It is sufficient to observe that the *word of God*, that is, the truth made known to us in the gospel, has such a power and efficacy as to influence the whole conduct
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of all those who duly attend to it; and must produce a total change of their temper as far as is really necessary, and establish in their minds, every sentiment and disposition that is suitable to their rational nature, and to the circumstances in which God has placed them. — But let us remember, that here we have an infallible criterion of the true Christian. If we are not really “born again of incorruptible seed “by the word of God,” that is, if the gospel has not had such an influence upon us, as to recover us from the power of vice, and to dispose us to the practice of every part of our duty; we have no just claim to the title and privileges of christians; nor can we have any foundation for hoping, that we shall receive any benefit by the gospel, either here or hereafter.

To strengthen the argument already offer'd, as a motive to fervent charity, the apostle, ver. 24, farther takes notice of the shortness of the present life, and the absolute precariousness and uncertainty of every thing that is confined to this world. Were temporal objects ever so important in their own nature; were the present life much longer, and its enjoyments much more certain and durable than they actually are; it would however be greatly absurd, for beings who have eternal prospects, to place their happiness in any thing upon earth, or to suffer

suffer themselves to be greatly agitated on account of any temporal enjoyments or advantages whatever. But when we consider farther, that the *fashion of this world is always passing away*; that our own frame is every hour lyable to the most sudden dissolution; and that of all the various objects around us, there is no one, of which we can be sure that it will continue in the same state for a single day; how does this heighten the absurdity of worldly mindedness, and of a selfish spirit! What folly can possibly be so great as that of neglecting or violating any part of our duty, in order to attain enjoyments of such an unstable and perishing nature?

“ All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.” No images can too strongly express the uncertainty of human life. And the utmost extent of human life is so short, as scarce to deserve our wishes in any other view, but as an introduction to a future and better state. Can we then need an admonition not to plan our schemes of life as if we were to continue here for ever?

The desire of life is for wise reasons deeply implanted in our nature. The thought of death strikes us with a sudden and involuntary horror. And we are sometimes apt to consider our mortality as a circumstance that

that throws a disgrace upon our nature. But our mortality is, in fact, our glory, as it is the only entrance to immortality. We fall - to rise again. We descend into the silent regions of the grave, only to appear again in a more exalted, a more honorable, and a happier state of being, if we seek for immortality by a patient continuance in well-doing. For "the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is his word, which by the gospel is preached unto you." And we may be absolutely certain, that the great promises of eternal felicity, which God has made to the pious and virtuous, will not fail to be most fully accomplish'd. He will for ever be both able and willing to confer every real good upon all his faithful servants. He will at once introduce them into a state of eminent dignity and bliss, and will give them a power of rising perpetually to still more and more exalted degrees of perfection. In this world, one race of men passeth away after another. Many generations of christians have acted their part of duty in this state of trial, and then have disappear'd. Many successions of faithful ministers have strenuously inculcated the great truths of the gospel, have warmly recommended to their fellow-christians the noble pursuit of immortality; but have soon receiv'd a dismissal from their important work. But though they are no
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longer visible to us on this side the grave, they are with God for ever. And his power and his truth will never fail. The gospel is still in full force, and its happy effects will be enjoy'd by the righteous unto all eternity. And the more abundantly that we exert ourselves in the work of the Lord; especially in proportion to the zeal and ardor with which we imitate the example of our heavenly Father, and of our blessed Savior, in doing good to all around us, the more transcendent and exalted will be our happiness, and our rank of dignity in the future state.

It is evident that the considerations suggested in the latter part of the text, may with equal propriety be apply'd to every part of our duty. The importance of the promises communicated to us by the gospel, ought to fill our souls with such a lively gratitude to God, as must dispose us to become conformable to the whole of his will. The serious review of our present state, and of that which is prepared for us hereafter, ought to incline us to every possible expression of genuine piety and devotion. And the shortness and uncertainty of our present life, should excite us to labor to secure our eternal salvation, by doing immediately "whatever our hands find to do" in the way of our duty; "forasmuch as in the "grave there is no work nor device," that

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is, after our removal out of this life, there will be no farther means of preparing ourselves for final happiness, if we leave this world in a vicious state of mind. And which of us, who are now assembled together in the house of God; which of us, whether old or young, whether weak and infirm, or healthy, strong, and vigorous, can have any just ground of confidence, that his earthly life will be continued so long as to permit him to join again in the solemn exercises of public and social religion?

But I choose to confine myself to that particular view, with which the words of the text seem to have been originally written, and with which they were particularly recommended to our consideration at this time; and shall therefore now proceed,

II. To represent still farther, the united force of the whole text, as a most apt and powerful persuasive to the exercise of the most fervent love and charity.

All mankind are proper objects of our love and affection, as they are beings capable of rational and virtuous happiness; capable of considerable degrees of happiness at present, and of infinitely greater hereafter. And is it not a most sacred dictate of reason, that we should wish well to all that are really capable of happiness, and as far as lies in our power, contribute to their most important interests?

Is it not likewise most evidently the will of God, that we should love one another? And has not he a just right to require our obedience in this, as well as in every other respect? He has made this *one* of the great terms of our final acceptance with him; and he has strongly inclined us to the exercise of benevolence and charity, by the very constitution of our nature. For what was man made, but for the devout love and humble veneration of his adorable creator, and for the exercise of an ardent love towards his fellow-creatures? How repugnant to the original principles of our minds is the indulgence of an unfriendly and malign disposition, or the want of a due affection toward those with whom we are connected in life! Do we not instantly censure those who express any degree of aversion, or even but a bare indifference, with respect to any of their fellow-creatures? Do we not naturally persuade ourselves, that we have a right to expect kind and friendly treatment from others? How great therefore must be our guilt, if we suffer our hearts to be harden'd against any of our fellow-creatures, or fail to yield them any acts of friendship that our circumstances will permit! And who does not perceive, that the chief and most aggravated of those evils, which are now prevalent in the world, take their rise from a want of due affection between man and man?

But

But farther, are not all mankind closely connected with, and related, to one another? Are they not all our brethren? Are they not all of the same make with ourselves, endow'd with the same powers and faculties, and design'd for the same glorious future immortal blessedness? Are they not all of them at present in a state of probation, in order to their being finally exalted to that state of perfect bliss, for which we ourselves are candidates? How unnatural therefore must it be to have no love towards any one of our brethren; to be in a state of disaffection towards any of those who bear so strong a resemblance to us, and who may finally be found among the faithful servants and favorites of God, and receive an abundant admission into his heavenly kingdom? For, as they are all of them our brethren, so they are likewise all of them the children of God our Father; and they, as well as we, have his image enstamp'd upon them.

There is no man, whose nature is so totally changed, as not to retain some impressions of the divine image. Can we then be destitute of tender affection and good-will toward any of the children of our great and gracious Father? Too many of them have indeed sadly debased themselves, have given themselves up to vile passions and inordinate lusts, have rebell'd against their God and Father,
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and have render'd themselves obnoxious to his just displeasure. But can this be a sufficient reason for our discarding all affection to them? Is there any one of us so free from imperfections, that we may safely presume to express an aversion to others on account of their crimes? Or is there any one of mankind so entirely lost to every principle of reason, as to have nothing that is good and amiable left in him? At least, is there any one of mankind that may not, before the close of life, recover himself from his vices, however low he may be sunk at present? Is there any one who may not rise from such a deplorable state, become virtuous and holy, regain the favor of God, and arrive at life and happiness eternal? Be their crimes ever so enormous; are not such unhappy, forlorn, and almost hopeless criminals, the proper objects of our pity, rather than of our aversion? Or can we consider the possibility which there is of our own falling into the like dreadful condition, and yet continue unmoved, unaffected, and destitute of concern on their account? Can we reflect on the unhappiness they must labor under in this life, and the tremendous misery, which will be their future portion, if they prove incorrigible: can we reflect on this, and not wish them a happy deliverance? And since it is evident, that so long as they are continued in this life, God has not given them

them up as absolutely irreclaimable, how can we throw aside all regards to them?

It seems indeed probable, that St. Peter, by his direction in the text, to "love one another," intended principally to recommend the exercise of love and charity toward our fellow-christians, those of the *household of faith*, whose adherence to the truths of religion, ought to be considered as a presumptive proof, that they are persons of real integrity and goodness, if we have no clear and manifest evidence to the contrary.

But though it is undoubtedly our duty to cultivate a peculiar affection and regard to persons of the most worthy characters, and especially to the faithful disciples of Christ; the true principles of the gospel will certainly lead us to cultivate a generous affection towards all mankind, without exception. God has manifested his good-will even toward the chief of sinners; and Christ came into the world, in order to reclaim the most vicious, and to give them a power of working out their salvation. And in the chapter immediately following that in which the text is contain'd, we are directed to "honor all men." Now if we are required to honor all men, because there is something in the human nature which demands our respect; we must certainly be under an equal obligation to wish well, and to be ready

ready to do good to all men, because the natural relation between them and us justly leads them to expect, that we should treat them with kindness and humanity. We ought therefore, in considering the great duties of charity to take notice of those regards which we owe to mankind in general, as well as of those more particular regards which are due to men of eminent and shining integrity and virtue.

Let us therefore observe farther, that as all mankind are the children of God, they are likewise all of them the objects of his care, and the partakers of his bounties. He now guards them by his good providence. He supplies their wants, and furnishes them with every thing really expedient for them. He earnestly desires their final happiness, and does every thing that can be done to enable them to seek and obtain it. If then it is an essential and most indispensable part of true gratitude, that we should endeavor to do every thing that is well-pleasing to a benefactor; can we be so ungrateful to that being, to whom we are indebted for every mercy we ever enjoy'd; can we be so ungrateful to him, as to have no regard to those whose welfare he so evidently desires, no concern on their account if they prove perverse, and no readiness to endeavor to reclaim them, if in our power, nor any satisfaction and joy in the happiness of those,
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who act a wiser part, and by habitual righteousness secure to themselves the best and most important blessings ?

But still more especially ; has not the infinite wisdom and grace of God laid a plan for the redemption of all mankind by the gospel ? And did not Jesus Christ, die for them all ? And does not this powerfully plead with us to open and expand our affections towards them all, and to cherish a sincere good-will towards every one of them in particular ? Can we contemplate our Lord, our Savior, the ever blessed Son of God, the benevolent, the friendly, the compassionate Jesus ; can we contemplate this gracious lover of all souls, to whom we are under such unspeakable obligations ; can we contemplate him as laying down his life, and expiring in agonies for the sake of every one of mankind, as well as for ourselves, and can we nevertheless continue destitute of affection towards any of those, for whom he has done and suffer'd so much ? How obdurate, how invincibly obdurate must that heart be, which is not influenced by such a consideration as this, to cherish a fervent good-will toward every one of the human race !

Lastly, are we acquainted with any who are not only by nature our brethren and the children of God, and who are not only in name and profession our fellow-Christians, but have likewise made a diligent improvement of the great advantages and privileges

privileges which they enjoy by the gospel, have by their faithfulness in the religious course, attain'd to considerable degrees of the divine resemblance, and by the goodness and usefulness of their lives, have shewn that they are indeed *born again by the word of God*, and may therefore justly be consider'd as the heirs of the most consummate glory in the future world? Are we, I say, acquainted with any such persons, and can we withhold our affection from them? If our own hearts are become truly pure, and if we can consider ourselves as being born again; must we not be disposed eagerly to embrace every opportunity of expressing our esteem for, and our benevolence towards, persons of such a character? Especially, if we have reason to apprehend, that they have any way suffer'd for righteousness sake, which is certainly the case of many christians? And must not our conviction of the general integrity of their hearts lead us to put a good construction upon any of their actions, that may appear of a more dubious nature, and dispose us to manifest a cordial love towards them, even tho' they should differ from us in religious sentiments, or tho' they should be ever so strongly attach'd to any particular notions or practices, which we ourselves cannot approve?

Having thus taken a view of our mutual obligations to love one another, let us
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now briefly consider, in what way we must manifest our christian charity and brotherly affection.

And here it is evident, that we ought upon all occasions to manifest a due esteem and respect towards those whom we perceive to be really worthy of our esteem, to judge favorably of every one, to palliate and excuse their faults, as far as is consistent with truth, and to express a suitable approbation of their conduct, whenever they do any thing that is really commendable and praise-worthy. But that kind of love, which is of the highest importance to mankind, as social beings, and which, therefore, the christian religion inculcates in the strongest manner, is such a benevolence and affection, as will dispose us habitually to study their welfare. And as God is the great source and fountain of happiness unto all his creatures; the true, the rational and christian love, must lead us to make it the matter of our most ardent supplications unto God, that he would be pleas'd to grant them every blessing that may be really expedient for them. We must likewise endeavor, if possible, to procure each of them kind treatment from all their fellow-creatures. But however others may treat them, we must not fail to do them all the service that we can. Especially, we must
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endeavor to lead them to a just sense of religion, and to persuade them to the practice of every part of their duty, that so we may contribute to their future everlasting felicity, as well as to their present comfort and satisfaction. And lastly, we must not only study to do them the best and most important services, but likewise to serve them in the kindest and most obliging manner; behaving ourselves with humility and gentleness, with affability and courtesousness toward them; bearing with their frailties and infirmities; sympathizing with them when in distress, and rejoicing in their prosperity, and studying to prepare ourselves aright for the most successful discharge of all the several offices of true friendship and sincere affection, whenever they may stand in need of consolation, or of admonition, or of advice of any kind.

From what has now been said, we may observe the beneficial influence of the gospel with respect to the affairs of human society, and consequently how worthy the christian religion is of public encouragement. All wise nations have encouraged the belief of a future state. But the firm expectation and hope of a future glorious immortality upon such terms as are laid down in the gospel, if it duly prevail'd in any one nation, must render it almost impossible that any uneasiness

ness or disturbance should arise in such a state.

Let me just add, that the true principles of christian charity are sufficient to influence persons of every various disposition, and even those who are naturally least susceptible of the impressions of generosity and humanity. Some men seem to have a natural asperity and moroseness of temper. But if such persons pay a due attention to the great truths of the gospel, they will soon be enabled to command themselves, to check every irregular emotion, to triumph over every perverse propensity, and to acquire that real goodness of heart and those friendly dispositions, which must appear peculiarly amiable and praise-worthy, when they are the result of such a virtuous labor and application. And let any person have ever so much natural goodness of temper, it is certain that the christian religion will enable him to attain to still farther measures of every truly amiable and engaging disposition, and will at the same time effectually preserve him from every weak, inconsiderate, and partial attachment, and render all the expressions of his benevolence noble, manly, and rational.

What a lively pleasure does it yield us, when we have an opportunity of surveying the conduct of one who is steadily actuated
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by a christian benevolence and charity! And how great is the satisfaction of reflecting that when such a person is removed from the stage of present life, he goes to a world where the most unbounded affection, friendship, love, and joy, are universally and uninterruptedly prevalent!

You will doubtless anticipate me in applying these observations to your late Pastor, the truly reverend and amiable Mr. *JOSEPH BURROUGHS*, whose removal, tho' so long expected, cannot fail to excite a tender emotion in the hearts of all that knew him.

It was his desire that I should say but little upon this occasion, concerning his personal character and conduct. But I could not undertake the service of this day, without claiming a liberty to make mention of some of his virtues.

You will join me in bearing witness, that the general course of his life was so regularly and uniformly virtuous, as to render him a real honor to his profession.

The integrity and purity of his heart were conspicuous in every part of his life. He manifested a most habitual regard to the great objects of a future world. He was earnestly desirous of doing good to all men. He was very zealous for the honor of God, and of the blessed Redeemer. And he was unwearied

unwearied in his endeavors to recommend and enforce the doctrines and precepts of rational and genuine religion.

He was born * of very reputable parents in this city, whose industry and piety were blessed with considerable affluence. He had a very liberal education, first at a private academy near *London*, † and afterwards at one of the most eminent universities abroad, ‡ where he made such a progress in many different branches of knowledge, as entitled him to great distinction in the literary world. But he principally apply'd himself to such studies as had a real connection with the ministerial profession.

It was an early proof of the goodness of his heart, that he chose to devote himself to the work of the ministry, as his circumstances were such as put it in his power to have fix'd upon some less laborious and more lucrative employment.

After a few years occasional preaching, he was invited by this church, in the year 1713, to the Copastorship with their then minister, the Rev. Mr. *Richard Allen*. He thought proper to decline that offer. But he continued to officiate in the congregation; and upon the death of that gentleman, he was chose
to

* *January 1, 1684.* † *Dr. Carr's at Highgate.*

‡ *LEYDEN.*

to succede him, and was ordain'd on the first of May, 1717; § since which time you know that he has serv'd you with the greatest fidelity, affection, and zeal.

He delighted in his work: and he discharged it in such a manner as might be expected from one who made it his chief pleasure. He was very careful to inform himself of the true sense of the sacred scriptures; and he explain'd them in his public ministrations with the greatest accuracy; for he justly thought that every thing was of real importance that tended to illustrate any part of the divine oracles. He was a steady friend to liberty and free enquiry. His zeal was not spent upon speculative notions, but upon such points as must be the most efficacious to rectify the hearts and lives of mankind. The practical duties of piety, charity, and inward purity, were his favorite subjects.—And as he preach'd, so he lived.

His conversation was always serious and instructive, such as became a christian, yet at the same time agreeable and pleasing. He had the happy art of rendering religion amiable. And he knew how to suggest important hints, and to improve the most common occurrences in life, in such a manner

§ See a particular account of his ordination in *Crosby's History of the English Baptists*. Vol. 4; P. 183, &c.

ner as might make the best impressions upon those who had the advantage of being frequently in his company.

He was a zealous advocate for the importance of the christian revelation, which he justly esteem'd as the highest blessing that the providence of God has ever confer'd upon the human race.

He thought it incumbent upon Christians to do all in their power to maintain the purity of the gospel institutions. As no particular terms of church-communion are prescribed in the New Testament, he concluded that every church must be at liberty to fix those terms, which it may judge to be most conducive to the main end and design of the gospel, provided that it does not attempt to impose them upon others. He apprehended it expedient that the churches of baptized believers should not admit to their communion, any but those who have regularly devoted themselves to Christ, in holy baptism, at years of maturity. But it was apparent from his whole conduct, that this did not arise from any narrow and contracted notions, or party-attachments; for he always shew'd an equal regard for all sincere christians, of whatever denomination, or sect. And tho' they could not all communicate at one table, yet he consider'd them all as being

E

equally

equally members of one and the same body, of which Jesus Christ is the great head.

Whenever he was called to baptize any person, it gave him real pleasure, even tho' they did not propose to join themselves to his particular society. He had many agreeable occasions of this nature; but one in particular, which gave him peculiar satisfaction, and shew'd the greatness of his zeal. A French Roman Catholic and his wife, being convinced of the errors of Popery, made their escape with much difficulty, and arriving upon the English coast, join'd themselves to a church of French Protestant Refugees. Upon farther enquiries, they soon received convictions of the true nature of baptism. But they could not submit to the ordinance, as they were wholly unacquainted with the English language, and there was no baptist minister in that part of the country, who could perform the service in the French tongue. Mr. *Burroughs* being apply'd to upon this occasion, readily undertook two considerable journies, at his own expence. During a stay of two or three weeks in their neighbourhood, he did not fail to take some opportunity for religious conversation with them every day. And at his second visit, he

he composed a discourse suitable to the occasion in French, and administered the ordinance much to the satisfaction of these worthy people. Some circumstances made it necessary to transact this affair in a very private manner, which prevented it from being generally known. One of these persons is still surviving; and four of their children are now members of an English baptist church.

He was a very strenuous promoter of every scheme that tended to advance the common interests of religion, as well as of those which were particularly calculated for the benefit of the baptist societies. The baptist churches in general are under considerable obligations to him. And how great is the number of those persons, who must mention with gratitude the important services they have received from him in their private and personal concerns! For he was continually seeking opportunities of being useful to as many as possible.

The writings which he has published, cannot cease to be esteemed by the judicious. His controversial pieces relative to the subjects and mode of baptism are allowed by the impartial to be full of weighty argument. His two pieces against Popery ought likewise to be regarded as highly useful. And his
volume

volume of printed sermons * are such as must approve themselves to almost every reader of whatever sentiments and persuasion.

For many years he had been afflicted with various bodily indispositions. Yet he persevered in his beloved work of the ministry, till his strength entirely forsook him. And nothing could be a greater concern to him, than that he found himself incapable of continuing to publish the glad tidings of the gospel.

In the close of life, his humility was very exemplary. He charged himself with many defects. He referr'd himself entirely to the mercy of God, and only prayed that God would enable him to finish well. His devotion was very fervent. Whilst he was in great pain, he many times repeated with peculiar emphasis those words of the psalmist, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength!"† adding some short remarks upon the vanity and insufficiency of man, and upon the experiences which he had had of the goodness of God. At last, being worn out with infirmities

* At the close of this volume is a *latin* discourse, deliver'd 1734, to the dissenting ministers, at their annual meeting at Dr. Williams's library. Besides this volume, he publish'd many valuable single sermons, on particular occasions. And he was also the editor of a volume of excellent sermons, eight in number, by his brother the Rev. Mr. James Burroughs, who died young, and never compos'd any more than those eight discourses.

† Psalm 18. 1.

firmities, after some hard struggles, he expired in a manner uncommonly gentle and easy; and is now, we may justly trust, enter'd into that everlasting rest, which is prepared for the children and faithful servants of God.

I doubt not, that you of this congregation, will long remember this excellent man, with much respect and honor. May the good impressions of his public instructions, and of his personal piety and virtue be ever visible among you! Especially, let me entreat you to remember the important exhortation, to continue in brotherly love. And give me leave to congratulate you, that though your justly beloved Pastor, who has so long labor'd among you, is now gone unto the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, you are already happily provided with one who will serve you with zeal, and will delight in contributing to your spiritual improvement and edification. Let me entreat those, who are more nearly related to our deceased friend, to recollect the obligation they are under to providence, for continuing to them so long the example of his piety and integrity. And let us every one seriously consider, how we may best improve the remaining portion of our time on earth. Let us labor to disengage ourselves from every thing

thing that can interrupt the prosecution of our duty, or hinder our progress toward perfection. Let us endeavor to abound in every good word, and in every good work. Let us cultivate every disposition of purity, charity, and piety, that thus we may lay up for ourselves, a good foundation against the time to come, and inherit life eternal.

And may God, who has begotten us again, by the resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ, to a lively hope of the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, stablish, strengthen, and perfect us, render us victorious in every trial, and finally grant us an abundant entrance into the joys and triumphs of his heavenly kingdom.



THE END.

Errata.

P. 8, l. 27, for *word* r. *world*.

P. 14, l. 23. dele *of*.



